

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for classifying network components of a packet-oriented network, comprising:
 - determining, from a central management component, whether a network component is a management-capable network component; and
 - if the network component is a management-capable network component, using services provided in the past by the management-capable network component to classify the management-capable network component.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein
 - a management agent unit is provided in each network component that is a management-capable network component, and
 - the management agent unit enables communication between the central management component and the management-capable network component.
3. The method according to claim 2, wherein communication between the central management component and the management agent unit takes place according to an SNMP protocol.
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the network component is classified as a host, a router or a switch.
5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising:
 - determining whether the network component supports layer 3 of the OSI reference model;
 - determining whether data packets have already been forwarded between interfaces of the network component; and
 - if the network component supports layer 3 and data packets have already been forwarded, classifying the network component as a router.
6. The method according to claim 5, wherein

if the network component does not support layer 3 and/or the network component has not already forwarded data packets, then ports of the network component are counted,
if the number of ports is greater than 1, the network component is classified as a switch,
and
if the number of ports is not greater than 1, then the network component is classified as a host.

7. The method according to claim 5, wherein
the network component has a management information base with managed objects, and
whether the network component supports layer 3 and whether data packets have already been forwarded are determined by an interrogation of the managed objects.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the management information base is administered by a management agent unit provided in the network component.

9. The method according to claim 1, further comprising, if the network component is not a management-capable network component, presuming that the network component is a host.

10. A central management component, comprising:
an inquiry unit to determine, whether a network component is a management-capable network component; and
a classification unit to use services provided in the past by the management-capable network component to classify the management-capable network component, if the network component is a management-capable network component.

11. A computer readable medium storing a computer program to control a processor to perform a method for classifying network components of a packet-oriented network, the method comprising:
determining, from a central management component, whether a network component is a management-capable network component; and

if the network component is a management-capable network component, using services provided in the past by the management-capable network component to classify the management-capable network component.